

AF Work on Anti-Missile Light Ray Gun Dropped

Scientists Had
Been Favorable
to New Project

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WASHINGTON, April 3 (UPI) — Congressional investigators disclosed today that the Air Force recently dropped work on a mysterious anti-missile light ray gun despite a favorable report by a group of scientists.

Existence of the space-age project was revealed when the House Space Committee published closed-door testimony taken last February. Chairman Overton Brooks (D-La.) told a reporter the gun would use light rays to explode incoming enemy missiles.

Joseph V. Charyk, assistant Air Force secretary, conceded in the testimony that one government committee of civilian scientists recommended going ahead with the project. But he said a second group urged an overall study of the "uncertainties" in missile defense.

Dropped Plans

The project was proposed by the Varo Co. of Dallas, Tex. Rep. Olin Teague (D-Tex.), a committee member, said the Air Force dropped plans for a \$6.4 million ray gun facility at Yucca Flats, Nev., and an additional \$2.9 million for research during the current fiscal year.

Rep. Brooks said he felt the proposed ray gun should be further investigated "to see whether there is anything worth while in it." Rep. Teague said the anti-missile system was "similar in principle to using the sun on a mirror to set fire to a leaf."

Funds Increased

An Air Force official, while agreeing that the project was canceled, said funds for a general study of anti-missile warfare had been substantially increased.

Charyk said the Air Force considered the ray gun proposal "premature, until we had pinned down, in a better fashion, some of the technical uncertainties."

Rep. James M. Quigley (D-Pa.), also a committee member, said Congress had approved the money for the radiation defense system "but that somewhere along the line someone, or a few persons, have just said, 'Let's not. Let's wait a while.'"

Quigley described the project as a "gamble, a calculated risk." But he insisted this was "one of those areas where maybe we ought to take a gamble."